

# **Human-Elephant Conflict Research Project**



**Nyae Conservancy & Khaudum National Park**

**Dr. Tammie Matson**



**Project Update  
26<sup>th</sup> December, 2006**



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## **Introduction**

After the main human-elephant conflict research study in 2005, this year was the time for feedback and implementation of the results. In 2006, two field trips were undertaken in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy to discuss the findings with the Conservancy leaders and implement the results of the research. An initial feedback report was provided to the sponsors and partners in October 2005. This report is a follow up to the first report and provides a summary of the activities that were undertaken in 2006.

A scientific paper on the study was submitted to Pachyderm in November 2006 and is awaiting review. A copy of the draft is attached.

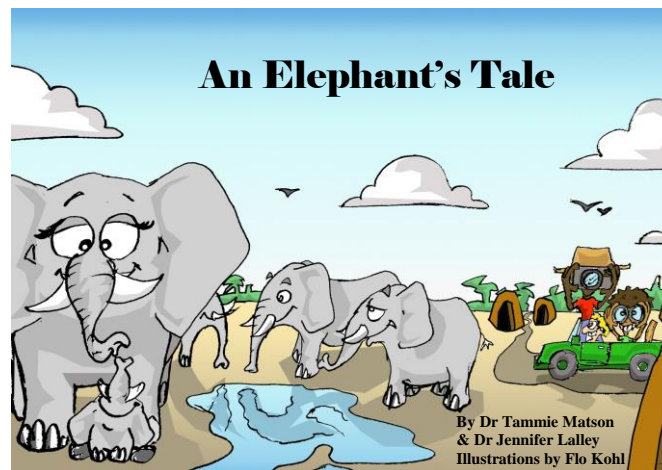
## **Feedback Field Trip, August 2006**

The Honourable Chief Bobo and the Chairman of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Kievet were each presented with a copy of the report and this was discussed with each of them on separate occasions with the aid of a local translator. Both leaders expressed their appreciation for the study and encouraged the implementation of results, specifically the building of cribs to provide clean water for elephants away from villages.

Kievet expressed that he was pleased to receive feedback as this was not usually done by researchers working in Nyae Nyae Conservancy. He told us that conflict with the growing elephant population in the area was one of his greatest concerns and he was pleased that the project was continuing. There seems to be much scope for further crib building in the future. Area warden, Dries Alberts advised that up to 30 cribs may be needed in Nyae Nyae Conservancy and Khaudum National Park.

Also in August 150 copies of the colour children's book, "An Elephant's Tale" (Matson, Lalley & Kohl, 2005) were delivered to the four operational village schools: Den/ui, //Auru, //Xa/hoba and Baraka. This was the same book that was used as an educational tool when the project partnered with the Children in the Wilderness programme in December 2005 with 12 San children from the Nyae Conservancy taking part at Palmwag Rhino Camp. Trine Strom from the Namibian Association of Norway, based in Tsumkwe, has arranged for the book to be translated into Ju/'hoansi and printed in 2007. Feedback from the teachers on the book has been extremely positive.

This field trip was funded by remaining funds donated by the Wilderness Trust, the Rufford Whitley Laing Foundation and the Namibia Nature Foundation. A satellite phone was kindly lent by Derek Moore of Satcom. Kalahari Car Hire provided discounted car hire as the company has for the duration of the project.



### **Implementation Field Trip, December 2006**

One of the key findings of the research was that in order to reduce human-elephant conflicts in Nyae Nyae Conservancy and Khaudum National Park drinking points for elephants should be located further from villages than they are at present. It appeared that the presence of cement cribs rather than muddy dams went some way towards reducing conflicts because elephants show a preference for clean drinking water, which may be why they come into villages seeking clean water from tanks and pipes.

In a partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Namibia (Tsumkwe), Ozquest Australia and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy two cement cribs were built in December at two high conflict sites, Tjokwe and Xamsa villages. These sites were identified by myself and area warden, Dries Alberts on the basis of their high conflict intensity. Both village chiefs welcomed the building projects.

Eighty-one bags of cement were donated by Warren Tapp of Queensland Directors, sixteen bags by Ozquest and transport was provided for sand, rocks, cement and volunteers by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Tsumkwe. Additional funding for transport and communications was provided by the remains of a Local Environment Fund grant from the Namibia Nature Foundation.

The building was initially undertaken by two groups of ten young Australian volunteers from Ozquest and two groups of five Ju/'hoan volunteers, arranged by funding obtained by Anders Wengen and led by staff of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism on the ground, in particular lead crib builder Shikongo, warden Dries Alberts and ranger Doyo Moyo. The Australians and Namibians worked closely together to collect rocks, make cement and build walls in a positive interchange of cultures that stimulated friendship and intercultural education. At the completion of building, the chiefs were collected from their villages and shown the final products.

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The Tjokwe crib had leakage problems, thus a third group of Ozquest and Ju/'hoan volunteers were recruited over a three day period to make repairs under the guidance of the MET. Overall, the building was a success and a rewarding experience for all involved. Plans are underway for further crib building in the future.



Completed Tjokwe crib showing team from MET, Nyae Nyae Conservancy & Ozquest, in addition to the Chief of Tjokwe and his wife.

### **Acknowledgments**

This project would not have happened without the ongoing logistic support of MET area warden, Dries Alberts, whose commitment to the area, its people and wildlife is invaluable. Dries and his team, including ranger, Doyo Moyo, and chief crib builder, Shikongo and several other workers were an enormous help in transporting of rocks, sand and volunteers and generally guiding the building process.

Anders Wengen and his assistant, Anton were a great help in organising the fourteen Ju/'hoan men who volunteered to assist with crib building, using funding Anders obtained for their tents and food. The team of local men were a pleasure to work with and gave it their all right to the end. Their humour won everybody over.

Thanks to Trine Strom for ongoing support of the educational side of the project, particularly in arranging the translation of “An Elephant’s Tale” into the local language.

Chief Bobo, traditional leader, and Kievet, Conservancy Chairman, continue to support the project and I am enormously grateful for this. The opportunity to work with the people of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy is something I will always treasure and I hope to do so for many years to come.

Finally, many thanks to project sponsors, Namibia Nature Foundation, the Wilderness Trust, the Rufford Whitley Laing Foundation, Satcom and Kalahari Car Hire, and to the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (Tsumkwe) and Ozquest for logistic support.